


NEWARK — Larrie Stalks, the 68-year-old Register of Essex County — who is also chairwoman of the board of Hill Manor, a federally-subsidized Newark housing project, has been indicted on federal conspiracy, bribery, extortion, and theft charges in connection with an alleged scheme involving service contracts at the housing project. Her 71-year-old husband, Frederick Stalks, who is alleged to have received no-show jobs as a result of the scheme, has been charged with conspiracy, U.S. Attorney Faith S. Hochberg announced.

Charged in a four-count Indictment returned today by a Newark Federal Grand Jury were:

Larrie Stalks (DOB 1925-09-25), of 131 Raymond Ave., South Orange, who has been the Essex County Register since 1974. Larrie Stalks is chairwoman of the board for Hill Manor, a federally-subsidized housing project at 611 Martin Luther King Blvd., Newark, which provides apartments to low-income Newark residents. If convicted on all four counts of the Indictment she faces a theoretical maximum of 55 years in federal prison and a \$1 million fine; and



Frederick Stalks (DOB 1922-12-07) of the same South Orange address, who is retired from the U.S. Postal Service, and faces a maximum of five years in federal prison if convicted on the one count in which he is charged, a \$250,000 fine.

The Stalks' are charged with conspiring between 1986 and 1993 with Anthony Zecchino, an area businessman alleged to be an associate of the Lucchese Organized Crime Family, to place private vendor service contracts at Hill Manor in exchange for kickbacks, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Bryan Blaney.

Included among those services were contracts for armed security guard services. Although Zecchino did not possess the necessary New Jersey private detective's license, four separate companies with which he was affiliated were hired to provide security Hill Manor in exchange for kickback payments, according to the Indictment, which states that more than \$1.5 million was paid to Zecchino-affiliated companies

Although Zecchino was not named on a contract between Hill Manor and Dougherty Detective agency, Larrie Stalks is also charged with causing Hill Manor to issue a \$22,600 check to Zecchino's attorney for Zecchino in payment for services allegedly rendered by Zecchino, according to the Indictment.

Fred Stalks was placed on the payrolls of two of those security guard companies and paid \$19,000 for no show jobs as a means of transferring bribe money to Larrie Stalks. Additional bribes were paid directly to Larrie Stalks, the Indictment states.

Larrie Stalks also misappropriated \$22,600 in Hill manor funds by giving Zecchnio a check in that amount on March 11, 1993, according to the Indictment.

Masters Investigative and Detective Agency was the first of the Zecchino-affiliated companies that were hired. Masters Investigative and Detective Agency was subsequently fired for deficient service and replaced by another Zecchino-affiliated company, Creative Security Guard Service. Creative Security Guard Service was then replaced by another Zecchino-affiliated company, V.I.P. Special Services, after the license holder at Creative Security left the company. V.I.P. Special Services was also fired for deficient service and replaced by a non-Zecchino affiliated company, according to the Indictment.

After V.I.P. was fired, a company that was not affiliated with Zecchino was hired. The Indictment alleges that, although that company had been providing competent services, it was soon replaced with the Zecchino-affiliated Dougherty Detective Agency, which was itself fired for deficient service within two months, the Indictment states.

In September 1993 Zecchino pled guilty in a federal court in Newark, to two counts of Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organization ("RICO") offenses for his participation in a bribery/extortion scheme with the City of Newark Sanitation Department, and a separate commercial bribery scheme with a local real estate concern. He is currently awaiting sentencing in Newark Federal Court on those charges.

Neither defendant was arrested. They are expected to be arraigned within the next two weeks before the U.S. District Judge in Newark, Trenton, or Camden to whom their case is assigned, Hochberg said.

The Essex County Register maintains an office at the Essex County Hall of Records and is the official who records deeds and mortgages filed in the county.

"The sale of public office and influence done to line the pockets of public officials is a serious crime," Hochberg said. "If proven, these allegations demonstrate a sad disregard for the security and welfare of the residents of Hill Manor, who deserve better."

An Indictment is a formal charge made by a grand jury, a body of 16 to 23 citizens, Hochberg noted. Grand jury proceedings are secret, and neither persons under investigation nor their attorneys have the right to be present. A grand jury may vote an Indictment if 12 or more jurors find probable cause to believe that the defendant has committed the crime or crimes charged.

Despite Indictment, every defendant is presumed innocent, unless and until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt following a trial at which the defendant has all of the trial rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and federal law.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Blaney, of the U.S. Attorney's Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.